

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: REPEAL OF PERONIST PRESS DECREES

REF: BUENOS AIRES 4302

1. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE IN VISIT WITH
AMBASSADOR JUNE 5, ROBERT COX, DIRECTOR OF THE
BUENOS AIRES HERALD, SAID HE VIEWED THE REPEAL OF
SUBJECT DECREES AS A DEFINITE STEP FORWARD TOWARD
PRESS FREEDOM IN ARGENTINA. COX ONCE WAS HELD
BRIEFLY FOR VIOLATING DECREE 1273. COX ADDED THAT
HE THOUGHT THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WOULD
IMPROVE IN ARGENTINA FOLLOWING THE WORLD CUP,
PROVIDED NOTHING HAPPENED THAT WOULD MAKE THE
GOVERNMENT FEEL HUMILIATED. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

2. THE REPEAL OF THE DECREES WAS GREETED IN TODAY'S
PRESS WITH PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE. SAMPLE
HEADLINES: LA NATION: "REPEALED OBSTACLES TO PRESS
FREEDOM"; LA OPINION: NORMS THAT AFFECT THE PRESS
ANNULLED"; CLARIN: "RESTRICTIONS ON THE PRESS ARE
ELIMINATED".

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3. IN AN EDITORIAL, THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD WELCOMED
THE REPEAL SAYING: "THE REPEAL OF RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED
ON THE MEDIA BY THE PERONIST GOVERNMENT IS GOOD NEWS
FOR THE PRESS; BUT IT IS EVEN BETTER NEWS FOR THE
COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. THE DECISION TO SCRAP THE TWO
DECREES GAGGING THE MEDIA IS AN INDICATION THAT THE

COUNTRY IS RAPIDLY RETURNING TO NORMAL... UNBELIEVABLE AS IT MAY SEEM TODAY THOSE TWO DECREES WERE INTRODUCED BY AN ELECTED, REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT WITH THE SOLE IDEA OF SILENCING ANY CRITICAL COMMENT OR, EVEN FACTUAL REPORTING ABOUT JOSE POPEZ REGA, THE LATE GENERAL PERON'S PERSONAL SECRETARY, WHO WENT ON TO SERVE AS HIS SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER AND EVENTUALLY BECAME THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE OF HIS WIDOW, ISABEL. THEY BECAME KNOWN AS THE 'LOPEZ REGA DECREES.' THEN, AS NOW, THERE WAS A MEASURE OF SELF-CENSORSHIP, FEAR OF OFFICIAL (AND UNOFFICIAL) WRATH AND AN UNHEALTHY TENDENCY TO LICK THE BOOTS OF AUTHORITY IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRESS TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT...ARGENTINA WAS NOT A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY UNDER THE PERONIST REGIME BECAUSE PEOPLE COULD NOT EXERCISE THEIR FREEDOM...EDITORIAL QUOTED APPROVINGLY STATEMENT BY REAR ADMIRAL RUBEN FRANCO, SECRETARY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, TO THE EFFECT THAT 'NO EXTREMISM OR TOTALITARIANISM WILL ACCEPT OR TOLERATE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: THIS ATTITUDE IS CLEARLY MARKING THE ROAD TO FOLLOW.'

4. IN LA OPINION, LITERARY CRITIC LUIS GREGORICH PRAISED THE REPEAL AND CALLED ON JOURNALISTS TO STOP SELF-CENSORSHIP, BE MORE CRITICAL, AND TO OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO WHAT IS CRITICIZED.

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5. ADMIRAL FRANCO ANNOUNCED THE REPEAL OF THE TWO PERONIST PRESS DECREES AT A COCKTAIL FOR THE PRESS AT THE CASA ROSADA. A SIMILAR ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE TO NEWSPAPER DIRECTORS BY INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY. PRESIDENT VIDELA APPEARED AT THE FRANCO COCKTAIL (WHICH WAS HELD IN HONOR OF ARGENTINE JOURNALISTS DAY) TO TOAST FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND TO TALK WITH REPORTERS. CASTRO

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